

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEERS —
CODE OF CONDUCT — COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

6333. Mr D.T. Redman to the Minister for Emergency Services; Corrective Services:

I refer to the recently released Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) code of conduct which is mandatory for DFES employees and volunteers, and ask:

- (a) Can the Minister confirm the process that must be followed for local regional volunteers to invite their local member into their DFES facility for a social (not official) occasion;
- (b) What is the consequence for a volunteer who invites a local member into their facility for a social occasion, but has not followed the protocol described above;
- (c) What protocols must be followed for those members of parliament who are volunteers for local emergency response organisations;
- (d) I note the Commissioner for Emergency Services recently said they encourage employees and volunteers of emergency service organisations to engage with their local member. Can the Minister describe what they are allowed to talk about, that is not in breach of the code of conduct;
- (e) Can the Minister confirm whether the following topics fall under the category of “Department business” and therefore cannot be discussed by DFES volunteers with their local member of parliament:
 - (i) Facility upgrades;
 - (ii) Safety issues with either facilities or operations of an emergency response;
 - (iii) Organisational culture within the workplace of an emergency response event;
 - (iv) Organisational structures involving interaction between career employees and volunteers;
 - (v) Bullying matters arising from interaction of career staff and volunteers;
 - (vi) Expense of Emergency Services Levy funds; and
 - (vii) Expense of government funds on emergency services; and
- (f) Has the Minister received communication from emergency service volunteer organisations on the matter of the gag order on communicating with MPs:
 - (i) If so, how many;
 - (ii) Can the Minister name the organisations who contacted his office; and
 - (iii) Were the organisations supportive or against the gag order on talking to MPs?

Mr F.M. Logan replied:

- (a) Volunteers can engage with their local members and invite them for a social occasion, however they should always seek the permission of the Department prior to issuing an invitation as the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner has a statutory responsibility for Brigades, Groups and Units that are under DFES management.
- (b) Such matters would be resolved through communication and education in the first instance.
- (c) If they are attending in their capacity as volunteers they are fulfilling their duty and there is no requirement to report attendance.
- (d) Any local issues other than Departmental business and operational matters.
- (e) (i)–(vii) The McGowan Government has provided volunteers with additional support and forums for issues to be raised to expedite a resolution. All examples provided are Departmental business. It is important that operational and Departmental matters are raised through appropriate channels, including DFES regional and metropolitan staff, Volunteer Liaison Officers, Volunteer Associations, and Volunteer Advisory Committees.
- (f) (i)–(iii) There is no gag order. Not applicable.